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ON THE TABLE.

THERE are ancient inventories and other manuscripts extant that give us very interesting information about Tables. To go no farther back than the reign of Charlemagne, we learn that that monarch possessed three silver tables and a gold one. One silver table was square, and upon it was delineated the city of Constantinople; the second was round, and enriched with a view of the city of Rome; the third was formed of three circles, and was traced with a description of the entire universe. The gold table was ornamented with precious stones accredited with the property of changing colour if poisoned food was put upon it.

An early vignette delineated in a ninth or tenth century Bible, preserved in the Paris Library, shows a semicircular table with a raised rim to it, and guests seated round the curved portion of it, some of whom are drinking out of long-necked bottles. There are no plates, no knives or forks, before them, and no cloth; but strewn on the table are bones, a salt-cellar, a loaf or cake, a dish raised on a stem holding a kid, and a large chopping-knife, with which that animal was evidently to be divided. The table rests on trestle-like supports, placed at regular intervals, which are partly hidden by festoons of drapery depending from the under edge of it. A twelfth-century manuscript preserved in the Strasburg Library shows a dining-table with the same kind of raised rim and the same absence of table linen. An additional implement is here depicted, of a nipper or pincer form, which must have been the forerunner of the two-pronged fork; but there is no indication that plates were used, except those on raised stems, which held the viands of which all were to partake. It was not, indeed, till the thirteenth century that plates performed any part in a banquet; before then, slices of bread did duty for them. At that date they were in use, but only sparingly, for one plate served for two guests, who were thus paired off; and tablecloths

were also then considered requisites. After a meal, it was the custom to remove the cloth and make use of the same table for amusements, such as chess and backgammon. In the old French châteaux, we are told, between the courses of a grand repast, on special occasions, performers mounted upon the table and recited couplets, or gave allegorical representations, or presented flowers to the guests. When the company was limited in number to a few persons only, long and narrow tables were used, one side of which was kept free for the attendants to wait conveniently upon those who were eating.

It was a long time before earthenware plates were used at table. Poor people ate off wooden plates and took their soup and porridge from wooden bowls. The middle classes used pewter; the very rich ate off silver plates. Silver dishes and silver dish-covers still hold their high place in the esteem of the wealthy; but the pewter plates of the great bulk of the middle classes are now almost curiosities, so completely within remembrance have they been superseded by inexpensive earthenware in all parts of the country. The use of wooden plates, too, only survives in the matter of bread-trenchers. Our medieval ancestors were aware of the luxury of hot plates; and so that they should not burn their fingers in carrying them, resorted to the expedient of placing them on rings of metal, perforated in an ornamental way, and furnished with handles and feet.

As time passed by, good table linen became much esteemed. Some of the napery for dressers and buffets was bordered with velvet and gold and fringed with silk; and the white linen cloths for dining-tables were woven with representations of flowers, trees, animals, heraldic devices, and other objects, as in the present day.

From a very early period, table knives had a similar form to that now in use, in so far as they consisted of a wide and long blade firmly fixed in a handle. There were carving knives; bread knives to cut the slices of bread that were used to place the portion of each guest upon,

instead of plates; and, among others, oyster knives, over and above the cook's knives used in the kitchen. As the art of carving has ever been looked upon as an accomplishment worthy of a gallant's best attention, we cannot be surprised that considerable care has always been expended upon the means required. We gather from old inventories that knives were spoken of in pairs in the same way as we now mention a case or set of them. A pair of knives comprised not only two carving knives, but a bread knife to cut the indispensable slices of bread, and several smaller knives for game and poultry. An account of the silver plate of the kings of France tells us, too, that there were handsomer knives used on grand occasions than at ordinary times. Thus there is mention of a pair of knives with ebony handles for the season of Lent; and another pair with ivory handles for the Paschal feast; and a third pair gilded and enamelled for the feast of Pentecost. The vignettes of old French manuscripts depict the blades as being of various forms. One is shown to have been furnished with a termination, or point, that was almost crescent-shaped, evidently for the convenience of dismembering joints; others are straight on one edge and curved on the other; in some examples both edges converge to a point. The Museums of Dijon and Mans possess specimens that belonged to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy.

Perhaps the earliest mention of forks occurs in an inventory of articles belonging to King Edward I. They did not come into use till the thirteenth century. Before that date people showed their good breeding in the manner in which they ate with their fingers, with the aid of a knife only, as we still do in the matter of bread and cheese. At first, forks appear to have been intended to be used in eating fruit only, probably to be quit of the discomfort of staining the fingers. We read of 'three silver forks for eating pears;' and again, 'a small fork of gold for eating mulberries.' They were small, and had but two prongs; and were richly ornamented, as became articles of luxury.

Old spoons had rounder bowls than those now in use, and their stems were short. The wooden spoons now sold at Russian fairs are of a similar form to those of the most ancient manufacture. Many people carried their spoons with them, as we now carry penknives, some of which were furnished with a perforation in the handle to admit of a string passing through them, and others with folding stems. Rich folks had their silver spoons then, as now. Less fortunate people used copper or pewter; and in museums may still be seen many examples in brass and gilded copper. The stems became in the course of time a vehicle for ornamentation; and eventually the twelve apostles were frequently represented as terminals for a dozen spoons. It was not unusual to carve spoons out of ivory and ebony, when the handles were also enriched with representations of personages and animals.

Salt-cellars, as the vignettes mentioned indicate, were placed on the table at a very early period; and they have always been a medium for the display of artistic taste. They were formerly furnished with covers, as mustard pots still are, and often kept locked with a key. They fre-

quently formed part of the contents of an ornamental receptacle placed on the table in front of the host, which contained also other articles required in the course of the banquet. One salt-cellar of fifteenth-century workmanship, in the Cluny Museum, is in the form of a man's head with a cap upon it. There is another example in the same collection, of a box form, enriched with a representation of the Annunciation on the upper side of the lid, and an illustration of the Crucifixion on the under side, with Latin mottoes attached. Sometimes they were furnished with tiny wheels in the manner of a chariot, that they might be easily passed down the table from one person to another.

Our old-fashioned tea-caddy seems to have been a survival of the receptacle mentioned above as containing various condiments. Down to the eighteenth century in France, it was customary to place upon the tables of people of rank a highly ornamental piece of workmanship, often in the form of a ship, in which were kept under lock and key everything likely to be required during the repast, including spoons, forks, napkins, cups, salt-cellars and spices, and in some instances toothpicks. The wines were also kept locked up in small ornamental receptacles placed on the table. Seeing that sudden deaths were often attributed to poison, it is not surprising that many precautions were taken to prevent what was, perhaps erroneously, supposed to be of very common occurrence. French inventories make frequent mention of these table-ships. They were made of silver and of gold, enamelled and set with precious stones, with silken sails and rigging. One that belonged to a Duke of Orleans was made of silver, and around it were banners, which formed small doors, opening down on hinges and giving access to the contents. The deck was packed with armed men, whose escutcheons hung from turrets at each end of the vessel. Six lions crouching under the keel upheld it in an upright position on a flat stand. An inventory of Charles V. of Burgundy mentions twenty-one of these articles made of silver and four made of gold.

Cups and goblets and flagons also furnished a considerable part of the array on the table in old times, especially in high places. A beautiful ewer sent by a caliph to Charlemagne is preserved in the treasury of the abbey of St Maurice, and there are many specimens in museums. Formerly cups were frequently furnished with covers, and the person entrusted with the formality of tasting the wine, to prevent suspicion of poison, drank out of the cover. When a cup had a cover, a stem, and a foot, it became a goblet, and if large, a 'hanap.' The latter was considered the cup of honour. At one time two persons drank out of the same vessel, just as two ate from the same plate. In the inventory just alluded to, the cup and ewer of St Louis and the cup of King Dagobert are set down. There are forty gold cups mentioned, nineteen goblets, a dozen 'aiguires,' or jugs, but only two hanaps.

Instead of dessert, or fruit, spices and sweetmeats were formerly partaken of afterwards. These were presented in richly ornamented receptacles, on trays or stands, in great varieties of forms. They were sometimes made of gold. One shown in a fifteenth-century manuscript in

the Munich Library is of an octagonal form, having turrets at each angle; it is raised on a low stem, and terminates in a foot, on which are eight dragon-like figures at equal distances. The cover is bowl-like, and is surmounted with an ornamental coronet, which serves for it to stand upon when placed upon the tray. There are two grotesque handles, with which it could be easily carried, and on the tray are two spoons, with which its contents could be distributed.

Froissart mentions the details of a banquet given to the king of Portugal by the Duke of Lancaster, at which the king, four bishops and archbishops, and the Duke of Lancaster, were seated at one table; whilst other dignitaries, barons, abbots, and ambassadors were placed at two others; and the rest of the company at separate tables. He says: 'The dinner was great and handsome, and well garnished with everything; and a great gathering of minstrels plied their trade.' Olivier de la Marche tells us when a sovereign was present at a banquet the service, or waiting, was sometimes performed by nobles, who were often on horseback, and that 'entrements,' dialogues in verse, or pantomimes, took place in the intervals of the serving. The floor was strewn with flowers; and wax candles, some held by valets, and others placed on the table, afforded the necessary lighting. Down the hall were disposed buffets and dressers, which served to display the vessels of silver and silver-gilt, glass and enamel. The repast was announced by sound of horn. On its conclusion, when the tablecloth was removed and games commenced, spices were served, not as part of the feast, but as we now serve coffee. It was not till the sixteenth century that fruit was eaten after a repast.

There were square tables, horseshoe-shaped tables, and round tables in the days of old, as well as the oblong ones mentioned. There were also single-stemmed tables. A vignette in a manuscript copy of the *Chronicles of Louis XI.* shows a square table with a single stem descending into a circular foot.

THE BURDEN OF ISABEL.*

CHAPTER XIII.—SAHIB GEORGE.

WHILE Isabel was thus occupied with the discovery of her father, the two young men down in Lancashire, whose hearts she had set aflutter and aflame—her cousin George and Alan Ainsworth—had begun to apply themselves, each in his way, to the task of winning her. Ainsworth, on his part, had exerted himself to find a post in London, and had succeeded with a celerity that surprised him, at the same time that it flattered his vanity; for he could not but think that his own deserts had much to do with his quick success. He did not then know, nor guess—though, when he did know, he was properly humbled and chastened in spirit—that the chief whose service he was leaving, who was one of the best of men and editors, had really bespoken for him the place for which he had applied on *The Evening Banner*. All he was aware of in the excitement of the occasion was

that *The Banner* wanted him in London at once, and that his chief had generously agreed to let him go.

George Suffield, on the other hand, had resolved upon a course which the committal of all the Suffield business into his hands left him free to choose. He had the self-confidence and the stout grain characteristic of so many Englishmen, which bear their possessors bravely through supreme difficulties of war, administration, and trade, but which cause them to blunder egregiously in the delicate business of love. George did not hesitate for a moment to believe that he would prevail on Isabel to be his wife, that his desire and his will must overbear all her scruples and doubts; he therefore wasted no time in vague longings, in downcast speculations as to ways and means of making himself more agreeable to her: he meant to marry her, to keep loyally his promise not to trouble her with his addresses for a time, and meanwhile to prepare such a position for her as could not fail to fill her and himself with joy and pride. The Suffield business was big, but he would make it bigger. The dear old dad—bless him!—had prospered exceedingly in the good old jog-trot ways; but his son was born into a sharper, adroiter—perhaps, less scrupulous—time, when a fortune might be made at a stroke, and he was resolved to lose no advantage which the turning of the wheel of trade might offer him.

It chanced that Fate had just then placed at his elbow a subtle, insinuating adviser to tempt him into risky ways. An unusual adviser—an unlikely adviser, many might think—but all the more dangerous a tempter for his being unusual and unlikely. Daniel Trichinopoly had been taken into the service of the firm, apparently; in reality, he was attached to the person of young Mr Suffield, much as he had been to that of the Sahib Raynor. There was nothing of the firm's usual business to which he could be set, but he lightly and easily slipped into the place of personal attendant and deferential and confidential retainer to the Sahib George. And George was more than pleased. He was of a generous and magnificent nature; it did not trouble him that Daniel did little or nothing to earn the emolument conferred on him; it was enough—indeed, more than enough—that he flattered him by his subservience and added to his feeling of consequence by his dark and inferior presence. Daniel put on a lavish show of obsequious admiration and affection, and George patronised and protected him. George suggested that since Daniel was to go in and out with him among the throngs of men, it would be well if he dressed more in the English mode—he would give him wherewithal to array himself properly; and Daniel humbly crossed his dark hands on his white guileless bosom, and professed the extremest desire to please a master who was great and good, strong, and beautiful—the heavens, said Daniel, were wide, but they were not wider than the beneficence of the Sahib George. So Daniel dressed himself in English attire—dark trousers and a loose alpaca coat—all except his head, on which he still wore the blameless turban, and was thenceforward assiduous in his service and in his flattery. He looked after the clothes of Sahib George; he waited upon the Sahib George

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at table and cooked rare little dishes for him; he fetched and carried for the Sahib George, and, like a faithful dog, was always found at heel when wanted either in the house or in the works or in the office in town; and constantly he dropped the insidious word in season into the Sahib George's ear. George had a vast opinion of his own shrewdness and judgment, but in reality he had much of his father's simplicity. He had a kind of large, open contempt for Daniel, and he would have been amazed and indignant if an acute observer had hinted that his black henchman was beginning to exert a prodigious influence over him; yet the extent of Daniel's influence even in the first week of his service may be judged from the following.

There had been supplied to the Suffield mills by a Liverpool broker sundry bales of American cotton which when opened made George swear, not loud, but deep: not only was the cotton of inferior quality, but the weight was made up by stones and other foreign rubbish packed in the midst of the bales. He exclaimed, in the hearing of Daniel, against the villainy of American shippers and Liverpool brokers both.

'With regard, Sahib George,' said Daniel, in his childlike humility, 'why the Sahibs of the great English mills do they use much-much American cotton? I beg to try to understand, but the same time I must say I am not able. I have think very much, but—no—it is not for the scarcity of fine and pure cotton stuff non-procurable. The native coolie of India, my own people—oh yes!—they grow much-much cotton. With regard, Sahib, why the English Sahibs buy they not very much the cotton of their own great India? I beg to understand.'

George answered carelessly that not very much Indian cotton came into the market, and that what did was short and dirty: the fact was, he knew very little about it.

'With regard, Sahib,' asked the simple Daniel, 'do he also have big stones in the middle of him? I beg to understand.'

George did not know. But the effect of Daniel's words was that George resolved to inquire concerning Indian cotton the next time he visited Liverpool, and that was after two or three days.

It was thus that George Suffield set out upon his independent and aspiring course; and he was in that mood when Ainsworth chanced to meet him on the very last day of his Lancashire sojourn. Ainsworth had said farewell to *The Lancashire Gazette* in the morning betimes, and had arranged to travel to London by a late train, intending to spend the interval with a college friend who was a journalist in Liverpool. He was thus in Liverpool in his friend's company at the hour of lunch. His friend proposed to entertain him at a club whither resorted at luncheon-time many representatives of Liverpool commerce—Liverpool shippers and Liverpool brokers, especially brokers. When they entered the dining-room of the club, Ainsworth discovered George Suffield occupied at one of the tables with three or four men. George did not see him, and he, remembering how they had parted at Whitsuntide, made no show of acquaintance with George. When they had withdrawn to the smoking-room, however, a hand was laid on

Ainsworth's shoulder and a cheery voice spoke in his ear: the hand and the voice of George Suffield.

'Who would have thought of meeting you here, Ainsworth?' he exclaimed. 'Not that you haven't as much business to be here as any one else, but I should have thought you'd be occupied with your paper at this time of day.'

Ainsworth introduced him to his companion, and said that he was done with *The Lancashire Gazette*, and was going to London that very night.

'Oh, indeed!' exclaimed George. 'You must come and dine with me—that is, if you have nothing better to do.'

Ainsworth answered that he doubted whether he could wait in Lancashire for dinner; he intended to travel late, but not so late as to preclude his reaching London and a hotel before midnight. While he spoke, he noted that George Suffield's eye wandered to a centre table, on which stood a rough deal box, and about which members of the club kept coming and going more and more with a subdued hum of talk and occasional bursts of laughter.

'What is going on there?' asked Ainsworth, looking from George to his friend.

His friend answered that he did not know, and rose to look.

'It's something of mine,' said George, with a conscious blush. 'I put it there. It's merely a joke; but I wish to show them—the cotton brokers, I mean—that that kind of thing shouldn't be allowed to happen too often. By Jingo!' he said, 'somebody's writing on the box!'

Somebody was writing in large chalk letters on the side of the open box—writing something which made those who read it shout with laughter.

'Let's see what it is,' said George, going to the table.

Ainsworth went with him, meeting his friend, who laughed, and said: 'It's not a bad joke.' This is what Ainsworth saw: in what appeared to be a large starch box was a big stone, on which was pasted a written label—'Specimen of Messrs Jones's middlings'—and on the box itself had just been written in chalk—'Specimen of Messrs Suffield's size-box.' Ainsworth was sufficiently acquainted with the terms of Lancashire trade and manufacture to know that 'middlings' meant bale-cotton of average good quality; and that size was the stuff with which manufacturers liberally dressed their webs to give their cotton cloths and calicoes more apparent substance. So he understood, and laughed: George Suffield had got *quid pro quo*, a Roland for his Oliver.

'So this is your joke, is it, Suffield?' said a little man coming and looking grinsly on the small boulder.

'Yes, Jones,' said George. 'And this'—pointing to the chalk writing—'may be considered your joke: it has been made for you. So we're quits.'

Mr Jones smiled wryly, but he said nothing; and George returned and sat down with Ainsworth.

'They laugh,' observed George in confidence, 'but they don't like it: I can see they don't. Of course I know it's not they that put stones and old iron and rubbish in the bales to make weight;

but they are responsible: they should keep their shippers in order. No; I can see they don't like it. But that doesn't matter. I can do without them better than they can do without me. I can ship my own cotton if I like; and I will!—And you are going to London to-night, Ainsworth? I wish you could stay and dine with me.'

Thus he continued, trying to show interest in Ainsworth, but continuing to be excited and occupied with the effect of his joke practical on the cotton brokers. Presently there appeared on the opposite side of the street, looking up at the window where they sat, a black man in a white turban. Ainsworth noticed him first.

'Is not that,' said he to George, 'the black fellow that was Mr Raynor's servant? I suppose he is in your service now: he is looking as if he wished to attract your attention.'

Daniel was in fact smiling and smiling with a gentle inclination of the head.

'Yes,' said George; 'that's Daniel. He is my servant now; a useful, faithful creature,' said he with a pointed smile, which obviously meant: You suspected him once, but we won't return upon that. 'I think he must have something important to tell me. Excuse me a minute.' In a little while he returned in haste, and said: 'I find I must say "Good-bye;" there is some business I must attend to on the Flinders; by which name Ainsworth knew the quadrangle of the Exchange was meant. 'I daresay you'll be seeing the governor and all of them soon. Remember me to them. Bye-bye.'

That was the last Ainsworth saw of the triumphant George, and the picture dwelt in his memory.

In an hour he was walking with his friend to the Central Station. As they entered upon the platform, a group of three strange creatures arrested their attention: Daniel Trichinopoly in his white turban and his black alpaca coat, underneath which shone his red cummerbund; a Parsee, fat of feature and of form, topped with his notable brimless Parsee hat; and a grotesque, hideous creature in ordinary English dress, whose face made one think he must have been buried and dug up again when partly decayed, and whom Ainsworth's friend recognised as a Greek or Levantine, well known as a frequenter of the Flagers. They were engaged in serious converse; and Ainsworth wished that George Suffield could see them so; for even the best of men may desire to show himself justified in his suspicions, to say, 'Didn't I tell you so?'

'Don't they look a sinister and villainous trio!' exclaimed Ainsworth. 'Did you ever see three men together that looked like a conspiracy of evil! What are they talking about, I wonder? Something wicked, with money in it, I'll be bound!'

His friend suggested that the man in the white turban looked a simple, honest, good-natured creature.

'Look at that hard, glittering eye!' said Ainsworth. 'It's as cruel as a snake's! I should not be surprised to discover he was the greatest scoundrel of the three. I dislike the looks of the others, but I distrust him upon instinct!'

So he entered the train and returned whence he had come in the morning. When he left the train, he did not need to leave the station, for

his luggage was already there in waiting for his journey to London. He turned on the platform to survey his fellow-passengers, wondering if the wearer of the white turban was among them. He was—along with the fat Parsee.

'It is odd,' said he to himself as he saw them walk away together, 'that that is the very combination I guessed when I saw the turbaned scoundrel in Suffield's mill.'

THE MUTTON BIRD ON THE FURNEAUX ISLANDS.

THOUSANDS of birds, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions, nay, hundreds of millions! A mighty host which cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude, crowded and massed together into one enormous swarm, darkening, like a thunder-cloud, the evening into black night before its time. Sheets and clusters of birds! of whom an eye-witness wrote some fifty years ago that he had 'actually sailed through them from Flinders Island to the Heads of the Tamar—a distance of eighty miles.' Birds, too, that are good for food, that taste so deliciously when cooked that a Bishop has lately written of them, 'Boiled or roasted, they are a dish to set before a king.' Birds whose feathers make the most perfect beds; and whose eggs supply the needs of hundreds of 'them that are afar off upon the sea,' or that dwell near the shores they frequent. Birds that excavate burrows instead of building nests; that, having made their curious homes, seem to desert them for weeks, as if the ten days' labour they have devoted to such an unbird-like occupation had been in vain, or a mere pastime. Birds that arrive each year on almost the same hour of the same day of the same month, and yearly depart as regularly at their appointed time. Birds so valuable that of and from them has in one year been harvested, on a little barren, treeless hummock of only a few hundred acres in extent in our southern seas, a net result of ten hundred and twenty pounds in cash.

To tell something about these birds, something of their history and habits, and of the people who live and move among them, is the object of this paper; and it is hoped that words coming from remote antarctic regions will not be uninteresting to readers in those northern isles so fondly spoken of as 'Home' by members of the Anglo-Saxon race in all parts of the world.

In Bass's Strait, between Tasmania and Australia, is situated a fair-sized archipelago known as the Furneaux Group. The name recalls that of Captain Cook, for it was his second in command, Captain Tobias Furneaux, who, in the year 1773, when in command of the *Adventure*, touched at Van Diemen's Land, and first saw their apparently barren shores. They consist of three or four large and many smaller islands; Great or Flinders Island, the principal, being best known as the place to which the harassed aborigines were sent, after having been driven into a peninsula of Tasmania by nearly the whole white population of the country, in the year 1830. Barren, Hummock, and Clark Islands rank next in size. These large islands are hilly, and grow timber, and cattle graze in moderate numbers upon them. Towards the

south-west of this group, and consequently nearer the mainland of Tasmania, are situated several smaller islets, known as Big and Little Dog, Green and Little Green, Babel Islands, &c. All of these last named are low and sandy, and are covered with a coarse kind of grass growing two or three feet high. Very little timber—no more, in fact, than a few scrubby bushes—can be found upon the islands, which, devoid of natural beauty, are inhospitable in appearance, tame, and dreary to a degree. Their inhabitants are chiefly half-castes, the offspring and descendants of European whalers and convicts and native women. These people are generally known as 'sealers,' from an occupation they formerly carried on to a considerable extent, and even now occasionally pursue, when a remnant of the once numerous flocks of seals revisits their ancient haunts.

But it is neither with men nor seals we have now to do. We desire rather to give some description of a curious ornithological subject, one which, even in regions where *rari aves* obtain, may be looked upon as amongst the strangest and most interesting of the fowls of the air and the sea. It belongs to the petrel family, and is commonly known as the Mutton Bird. In appearance it resembles a small wild duck, except that the bill has in a slight degree the turned overhook of most sea-birds. It is of a sooty-brown plumage—hence sometimes called the Sooty Petrel, and the sexes are externally indistinguishable. The egg is pure snow-white, two and three-quarter inches long by seven-eighths of an inch broad. The white or albumen forms an unusually large proportion of its contents. 'It is remarkable,' says Gould, 'that a small part of both the yolk and the white remains soft and watery, however long the egg may be boiled.' The food of the full-grown Mutton Bird consists of shrimps, small crustacea, and molluscs; the young live chiefly on grass and sea-weed.

The peculiarities and habits of these birds seem first to have been noticed and described by Flinders, when he and Bass made the celebrated voyage which resulted in the discovery of the strait between Tasmania and the Continent of Australia, since called after the latter. On December 9, 1798, Flinders writes: 'After rounding the north-east point of the three hummock land, our course westward was pursued along its north side. A large flock of gannets was observed at daylight to issue out of the great bight to the southward; and they were followed by such a number of sooty petrels as we had never seen equalled. There was a stream of from fifty to eighty yards in depth, and of three hundred yards or more in breadth. The birds were not scattered, but flying as compactly as a free movement of their wings seemed to allow; and during a full hour and a half, this stream of petrels continued to pass without interruption at a rate little inferior to the swiftness of a pigeon. On the lowest computation, I think the number could not have been less than a hundred millions; and we were thence led to believe that there must be in the large bight one or more inhabited islands of considerable size.' He adds in a note the calculation by which he arrived at the estimate of their numbers—thus: 'Taking the stream to have been fifty yards deep by three hundred in width, and that it moved at the rate

of thirty miles an hour' (Gould says they fly as fast as sixty miles an hour), 'and allowing nine cubic yards of space to each bird, the number would amount to 151,500,000. The burrows required to lodge this quantity of birds would be 75,750,000; and allowing a square yard to each burrow, they would cover something more than eighteen and a half geographical square miles of ground.'

In the History of Tasmania written by the Rev. John West, and published in that colony in 1852, it is stated that 'the sooty petrel or Mutton Bird occurs in immense flocks in Bass Strait. This bird burrows in the ground, forming what are called by the sealers in the Strait "rookeries," and a considerable trade was at one time carried on in their feathers, eggs, and salted bodies.' Gould in his monumental work on the *Birds of Australia* gives a full-sized coloured engraving of the bird, and a lengthy description of its habits, chiefly compiled from the remarks of Mr Davies, published in 1846. He states that the bird is an inhabitant of all the Australian seas, but is nowhere known to exist in such countless numbers as about the Furneaux Group.

Their habits may be thus described. About the commencement of September the birds congregate, and in the middle of that month, during the night-time, come in to the islands in order to prepare their nests. This they do by scratching away the sand with their feet, casting it behind them in clouds, until a small tunnel or adit is made sloping downwards into the soil to a depth of from two to three feet, in appearance and size something like a rabbit burrow. It takes them ten days to open these temporary homes or 'rookeries'; and when finished, every bird flies away again, leaving the place absolutely deserted. They then remain at sea from five to six weeks, never doubting that their rookeries will be in the same order on their return as when they departed. On or about the 20th of November, as the sun sinks into the sea, a few arrive; but it is not until four days afterwards that any great number reach the nursery. On the night of the 24th the real incoming takes place, and flocks of them are seen making for the islands from every quarter. They continue to fly about for nearly an hour, and ultimately settle. Each burrow has an inmate, sometimes two, occasionally three female birds nestling within it. Many cannot find cover, and have to remain amongst the grass. The noise and confusion that follow are frightful; but as night darkens, stillness prevails. In the morning the male birds fly away before the sun is fully up, returning in the evening, and on every evening, to feed their mates, who remain on the nests until the chicks are hatched. Shortly after they are hatched, the young birds are left in the burrows, both parents being absent all day, but bringing back food at sunset, and resting every night on the land until the new brood is strong enough for flight.

The return of the parents every evening is one of the most wonderful sights on earth. As the rays of the setting sun fade, and the short inadequate twilight of our Australian climate faintly illuminates the gloaming, an observer on a slight eminence is startled to hear the sound of some object rushing swiftly through the air, and is just able to observe a solitary petrel, truly sooty now,

dart straight across the gloom direct to its lowly home. Hardly has it passed when the air is black with pinions, and the partial obscurity becomes deeper as an innumerable company of birds rushes mysteriously from the darkening sea towards the darker earth. So dense is their mass, that, as a writer who saw them in 1839 says, 'night is ushered in full ten minutes before the usual time.'

In a paper read before the Royal Society of Tasmania, Dr Montgomery, the Anglican Bishop of that colony, gives a vivid account of the impression left upon his mind by this home-gathering. He has been called by duty to these remote islands; and he admits that while he was prepared to be interested in studying the mutton birds 'at home,' the reality far surpassed his expectations. 'Just at sunset,' the Bishop says, 'I was invited to go some two hundred yards up on to the higher ground—the island is only two hundred acres in extent—in order to see the birds come in. I shall never forget that evening as long as I live. The sun was setting, leaving a broad belt of crimson on the western horizon, and soon the surrounding sea became invisible. Not a sound was heard except the rustling of the grass in the wind. There was no indication that there was a living thing on the island. There were no cries of sea-birds. The stillness was wonderful. Presently, a single dark-winged form flitted across the island and vanished again into the gloom. In another ten seconds thousands upon thousands of birds seemed to spring like magic up out of the darkness from every quarter, without warning or cry of any kind. And now, backwards and forwards before my dazzled sight, I saw these countless dark shadows shooting with lightning rapidity athwart the last of the evening light. Still no articulate sound was heard. Nothing but the whistle as if of bullet after bullet through the air, bewildering one with the sense of numbers and of mysterious rushing life. Repeatedly a bird would dash within an inch of my head, and then wheel like lightning to one side to escape a collision. The minutes passed, and still this dizzy, whirling hurlyburly of creatures continued—silent and even awe-inspiring. Sometimes they came in squadrons of hundreds, sometimes by tens. But still they came, each bird, after a turn or two, sinking with unerring instinct on to its hole, finding it in the long grass and darkness with a certainty which was truly marvellous. It was difficult to tear one's self away from this wonderful spectacle. But at length we returned to our tent, pitched near the water's edge, but still among the bushes; and all night long, as I lay trying to sleep, I heard the cooing and cackling of innumerable birds feeding their young in their subterranean homes, some of them apparently within a yard of my ear. At length I fell asleep; and before I awoke, at six o'clock in the morning, there was not a bird to be seen on the island.'

The half-castes come to the island just before the birds, bringing firewood and water with them from Flinders Island. They collect eggs first, then they catch some of the old birds; and the way in which they trap them is peculiar. The petrel cannot fly from the ground. He must either get on a projecting edge of rock to start his flight, or rise from the water. From the

sea-shore to his burrow he makes 'tracks'—that is, the ground is trampled and hardened into narrow paths. Taking advantage of this, on some favourable night the trapper blocks up the greater number of the pathways and digs pits across the remainder. Unable to proceed by those that are obstructed, the birds crowd into the open tracks, and reaching the pits unexpectedly, tumble into them, and are suffocated by the crowds of their fellows who follow. But it is the young bird when a few weeks old that is captured as being the most delicate food. He is very fat—almost, indeed, all fat—and after being spitted before a fire, is a truly exquisite morsel. Dr Montgomery says: 'That the young fresh birds are delicious eating I can testify. They taste like a very fresh herring, as we know that fish in the old country.' The half-castes salt and export them, or sell them to trading schooners, &c. They are unquestionably nutritious when thus treated, and are said to be as healthful for delicate persons as cod-liver oil. These fowls do very well during the season; a man and his family can earn about four pounds ten shillings a day for nine weeks, spending nothing, and living entirely on the birds all that time. As well as the salted birds, eggs and feathers are also collected and sold.

Unfortunately, by leasing some of these small islands to settlers, the Government has taken a step that has done enormous damage to the birds, and may, if not checked, lead to their extinction. Through the culpable negligence or cruel thoughtlessness of the settlers, whole islands are becoming deserted. Gun Carriage or Vansittart Island is now absolutely abandoned by the petrel. This has been caused by turning bullocks on to the island. The cattle in roaming about for food—or, as an Australian would say, for 'feed'—trample on the burrows, and crush to death under their heavy tread many of the young birds, many more being smothered in the holes which are completely closed by the tramping of the beasts. This is much to be deplored, and it is to be hoped that grazing leases, from which but a paltry revenue is derived, will be done away with, and a close season for the protection of the birds for at least half the year enacted. We have stringent game-laws in Australasia, not against poachers—our game is free to any man—but against its destruction at the breeding season, and the Mutton Bird needs protecting as much as any other wild creature. Curiously enough they have not been left by nature absolutely without a protector, although one of an extraordinary kind. These low grassy isles abound in snakes, and every man, woman, and child you meet upon them is armed with a stick or gun with which to destroy these hateful creatures. But the snakes rarely touch the Mutton Birds, living, indeed, on mice and other small fry, which are also numerous. The snakes are not often found in the burrows, although it is recorded that a young girl of sixteen pulled two out in one day, when catching birds a year or so ago. How numerous they are may be judged from the fact that a Mr Smith, a half-caste, had all the snakes his party killed in one season thrown into a heap, and at the end of two months they numbered six hundred. There is, however, one island, Babel Island, where the Mutton Bird is rendered secure

against mankind owing to the enormous quantity of snakes that exist upon it. Even these hardy sealers dare not visit it in quest of them, although quite a fortune in birds and eggs might be garnered there. In that place, thanks to the serpent, the sooty petrel lives and breeds in peace. Surely it would be possible to ordain that on many another rookery a similar state of things might be brought about without the intervention of the dreaded snake.

BY ACCIDENT.

CHAPTER III.

THUS with kaleidoscopic rapidity was the course of Dick Marsden's road through the world changed. His was indeed a strange position. By his uncle's death he inherited an income of over two thousand a year, and was at once ranked amongst the envied ones of the earth. And yet this position he would have to share with a low-born, ill-educated, almost depraved woman, with whom his sole bond of union was the marriage certificate of a country registrar.

During the past two years, when the glamour of his ill-considered passion had been rudely dispelled by the world into which he had descended, Dick had drifted into a condition of lifeless, aimless despair. He had been obliged to work, and to work hard, for the allowance which his uncle made him was merely nominal, the old gentleman being under the impression that his nephew, who turned up so regularly on Thursdays in Portland Place, well dressed and smiling, was making a good income by his pen; but he worked with about as much heart and enthusiasm as the galley-slave chained to the oar.

He first resolved that he would make Leah an allowance, and give her leave to go where she liked and do what she liked; but upon reflection, better counsels suggested themselves to him. He was a philosopher as well as a gentleman. He was married to this wretched chanter of spicy ditties at a fifth-rate music hall, and the heart which should have been a wife's was in the keeping of another. Still, Leah was his wife, and it was his duty to make the best of a bad bargain. Here his philosophy showed itself. The gentleman came out in his resolution, now that he was in an independent position, to lift the girl as nearly to his own level as he could, to soften and refine her if possible.

Before, however, finally arranging his course of life there were two duties to be performed. The first was to see Marian Akhurst, and to tell her his secret. The second was to send Seth Hearn, his father-in-law, about his business. He wrote to Marian, and asked her if she could meet him, as he had an important communication to make, and he named Regent's Park as their place of meeting. There, in one of the least-frequented alleys under the trees, bare and leafless, but aglow with winter sunlight, they met. Dick eagerly scrutinised her face as she advanced to meet him, for he feared what her feeling would be upon receipt of such a request. It was calm and smiling as ever, the cheeks pale, and a strange, inquiring look in the eyes.

'I am going to unburden my mind to you, Marian, of the secret which has kept me apart from you, ay, and from the world, during these past two years,' he said. 'It will shock you, I fear, and, under ordinary circumstances, I would tear my tongue out rather than shock you. But you must know.'

The girl looked imploringly into his face. He was silent for a few moments, for he knew not how he could strike with so terrible a blow the gentle creature at his side. But it had to be struck, and procrastination would not soften its fall.

'Marian,' he said, 'I have been married for two years.'

'Dick!' was all the girl could cry; but the name was gasped out with an emphasis which was half agony and half incredulity.

Then he told her the brief, sad story of his infatuation for the stately young gipsy girl who had acted with him at the Snuggery, and of the terrible price he had paid for what he had deemed the realisation of his dream of happiness. He made no excuses: he did not lament his fate: he did not decry the woman who was as a mill-stone round his neck, for he knew that she who listened to his bare relation of facts could supply the tints and shades required to complete the picture.

For some moments she walked by his side in silence. Then she said gently: 'I am sorry, Dick, not because you are married—God forbid that I should be so selfish—but because of the unhappiness it has caused you. Your story is no strange one; I hear it often and often, so that I seem to know every detail of it without your telling me.'

'And now that I have told you, Marian,' said Dick, 'do you wonder that I never told you before?'

'You did what you thought was best for your uncle's sake, did you not?' said the girl.

'Yes; I *dared* not tell him, and I *dared* not tell you,' said Dick. 'I don't believe it would have changed him towards me; but I know it would have grieved him to the heart. I did not tell you, because—because I knew what you thought of me, and I dreaded the result. But you will always be my friend, Marian? I shall need friendship now as much as ever I did.'

'Dick,' said the girl, 'I will never change towards you. But I am sorry—so sorry for you. I do hope *she* will be a better wife to you in your better circumstances, for you deserve the best a woman can give you.'

They walked on a few minutes longer, and then separated.

Dick's next duty was to arrange matters with Seth Hearn. That gentleman, who of course very soon became informed of the turn things had taken for the better, was very much to the fore, and eagerly volunteered his aid, assistance, and advice in any matters in which Dick should command him, marking his intention of associating himself intimately with the arrangements to be made by the constant use of the pronoun 'we' in connection with them.

Dick, however, at once disabused him of all misunderstanding. 'Now, Mr Hearn,' he said, 'let us understand each other at once and for all. I've put up with your interference with my

domestic life during the past two years for the sake of my wife. Now, you can go, and I see no further occasion for our meeting again.'

Hearn, who had been fortifying himself against possible unpleasantness, staggered at first, but soon recovered himself. 'No, no, Dick!' he said. 'You don't mean that. Separate a father from his only child! Turn an old man out into the cruel world! No; I think too well of you to believe that. Me and Leah can't be separated; the poor child would fret; I know she would.'

'Not she! I mean what I say, Mr Hearn. She can go to see you, but set foot in my house you must not, and shall not. Now you understand me.'

The man gave him a look expressive of the utmost hate and contempt, but still he whined out: 'But, my dear Dick, you'll keep me. Mind, if I hadn't consented to my gal marrying you, she'd ha' been driving about in her broom with dimonds on long ago. But, says I, Mr Marsden's a gentleman, and it's a gentleman my Leah must have.—You'll make me a little allowance, won't you?'

'No, sir. You've done your share of making my life a burden to me, and I don't wish to have anything further to say to you.'

The man went out scowling and muttering, and Dick felt that he had not finished with him yet.

Dick Marsden chose for his new home the neighbourhood of the village of Bennington, to which allusion has already been made. He chose the locality as being particularly fitted by its quietude and remoteness for the successful carrying out of his scheme with regard to Leah, but said nothing to her about it until the house was ready for occupation.

'We shall live in London, I hope?' said she.

'No; in the country.'

'Far?'

'Fifty miles.'

'Fifty miles from London!' she exclaimed. 'That will be terrible. I shall fret myself to death. I've never been accustomed to it. Remember, I am your wife, and I should have been consulted.'

She did not speak passionately, not at all as she would have spoken about a similar proposal a few months previously, and Dick was astonished. But he was encouraged. Perhaps, after all, there was some true metal beneath the coarse dress of her manner.

'Am I to be separated from my friends as well as from my father?' she asked presently.

'Yes,' replied Dick, 'inasmuch as I cannot have them at my house.'

'But you will take me amongst your friends?' she asked.

'That—that depends upon yourself,' answered her husband. 'At present, no. At some future time, perhaps. My wife must show herself the equal of my friends.'

'Why didn't you think of that when you married me!' she exclaimed bitterly, but still not angrily. 'I married you because you were a gentleman, and because I expected to be treated as a lady. Now, I shall be a general laughing-stock, and all my friends will say: "Serve her

right for marrying a gentleman instead of knowing her position and keeping to it." Why did you go and marry me if you never intended me to show myself as your wife?'

Dick forbore from making the answer in his heart: 'Because I was a young fool.'

So Dick and his wife started their new life at the Grange, Bennington.

Weeks passed, and the young man saw that his intense endeavours to make Leah his wife in something more than name were not successful. The girl seemed to keep aloof from him, and all his efforts to live pleasantly and affectionately with her met with no response. She had now attained the object of her ambition, the command of wealth, and yet she was palpably unhappy. The idea of passing her life in this great, quiet country-house seemed absolutely to terrify her, and it was quite clear that she derived no pleasure from the society of her husband. Incurable restlessness and inability to fix her attention upon any pursuit for more than a few minutes, Dick ascribed to her semi-public training and bringing-up; but for certain new features about her nervousness, her sleeplessness at night, her habit of muttering to herself, he could not account. In vain he sought for a remedy. He offered to have music and drawing masters for her; he tried to interest her in country-life, in the garden, in the stables, in reading, but ineffectually.

Then he made a concession out of sheer pity for her condition—a condition into which of course he might blame himself for bringing her. He steadily refused to admit her father to the house, but he gave her permission to have some of her old friends down.

She was delighted, and for the first time since their change of fortune, showed anything like an approach to her old vivacity. In their company she became an altered creature, and although Dick could not bring himself to receive them himself in the person of host, he allowed her to play hostess with unstinted hand, and did not intrude his restraining presence upon them. To give Leah's London friends their due, they behaved themselves better than could have been expected from individuals of a class whose recreative notions are usually associated with excess of liberty of speech and action. They were slangy and noisy, it is true; and the rude janglings of the grand piano in accompaniment of unclassical ditties suggested irresistible comparisons in Dick's mind with the sweet old English ballads which Marian Akhurst used to warble after dinner in the drawing-room at Portland Place; but nothing went on which would bring actual discredit on the house; and the natives who were attracted to the gate on the high-road by the brilliancy of illumination, the festive sounds, and the vision through widely opened and unblinded windows of gaily attired ladies and animated gentlemen, pronounced the company at the Grange to be 'a rare good lively sort and no mistake.'

But not even did this great concession seem to draw husband and wife any nearer to each other. Dick tried hard to analyse Leah's feelings towards him. He did not think that they had changed for the worse—that is to say, from feelings of mortification and disappointment to feel-

ings of actual dislike. On the contrary, she really seemed to appreciate his efforts to make their union a substantiality, for she was quiet almost to submissiveness; she had lost her old freedom and sharpness of speech; she thanked him for little kindnesses and attentions, and she busied herself to the best of her ability in household affairs.

Still, there was a gulf between them; and between any other married couple, Dick would have called it the gulf fixed by a woman *afraid* of her husband. Leah never looked him in the face. To be alone with him for any length of time was palpably irksome to her. Her gaiety in his company was forced, and on more than one occasion when he spoke kindly to her she actually burst into tears. Dick then wondered if her separation from her father had anything to do with her unaccountable depression, and yet he remembered that in the old days of poverty the relationship between father and daughter had never struck him as being affectionate, although they invariably sided with one another against him.

Gradually Dick began to observe that a great change was being wrought in Leah's appearance, and that she whom he had married as a fine, handsome young woman, was in less than three months beginning to look old and haggard.

One morning he was surprised to see the doctor's carriage at the door. Leah had gone to bed early on the preceding night, and had not been down to breakfast that morning. Dick waited for the man, and took him into his study.

'I am glad you have asked me to come in, Mr Marsden,' said the doctor, 'for although Mrs Marsden asked me not to let you know that she had sent for me, I should have felt it my duty to inform you that she is in an exceedingly unsatisfactory state of body—and mind.'

'Mind?' repeated Dick.

'Yes; mind,' said the doctor. 'I don't like the constant craving she has for change, for distraction, for excitement.—Tell me, has she had a great trouble or disappointment lately?'

'Not that I know of,' replied Dick. 'She was disappointed when she married a gentleman to find that he was a poor one; and now that he is not poor, she may be disappointed at not being admitted into his circle of friends. But I can think of nothing else.'

'No; I don't mean that sort of disappointment,' said the doctor. 'I mean something mental rather than sentimental.'

'I know of nothing,' said Dick.

'Was she always like this?' asked the doctor.

'No; certainly not,' replied Dick. 'But, then, you see there was always an element of excitement about her professional life.'

'Hm! Well. Unless she alters her style of life,' said the doctor, speaking impressively, 'I will answer neither for her reason nor her life.'

'Good gracious!' exclaimed Dick, 'is it as bad as that?'

'Yes,' replied the doctor; 'she must live regularly; she must see few people. And—excuse me for asking such a question—has she any reason for being *afraid* of you?'

Dick started. The doctor had asked him the very question which Leah's peculiar attitude towards him of late had often prompted him to ask himself.

'Good God! no!' he replied—'not the shadow of a reason.'

The doctor shrugged his shoulders in a puzzled way and took his leave.

Dick rang the bell, and told the servant to ask Mrs Marsden to leave her friends for a few minutes and come in to him.

Presently Leah entered the study. On her face there was written inquisitive, almost fearful wonder. Although it was not mid-day, she was gorgeously arrayed. Her thick mass of black hair was gathered together with a diamond spray; her fingers glittered with rings. But the fire in her eyes was unnatural; and the mouth, regarding which Dick and many other golden youths had often raved in rhyme, was beginning to have that thin, drawn-out appearance which is one of the most reliable trademarks of the handiwork of Time and Wear.

'You sent for me?' she said, quite anxiously.

'I did, Leah,' replied Dick, leading her to his own chair and seating himself on the escritoire. 'I want to speak seriously and for your own good.'

The girl's face turned quite pale, and her two hands were knotted together so tightly that the finger-ends seemed to be buried deeply into the flesh.

Dick went on. 'The doctor has been here; he gives a very bad account of you.'

A sigh of palpable relief escaped the girl. 'Do you believe in doctors?' she asked.

'Not always,' replied her husband. 'But in this case I can see for myself that there is cause for anxiety. He says that unless you change your method of life the consequences will be serious.'

'Does he mean that I am going to die?'

'No—not exactly. You must lead a quiet, regular life, he says.'

'That would kill me; or it would drive me mad. May I have my father with me occasionally?'

Dick got off the table and walked up and down the room for a few moments in thought. 'I will see,' he said presently. 'But at anyrate all your friends must go.'

'Very well. If you insist upon it, they must. But if it had not been for them, I should have gone mad before now. I believe you mean well; but you both forget that I have been accustomed to a life of excitement, and that to take away excitement of some sort from me is like shutting a flower up in a cellar.'

'I understand you,' said Dick kindly, and taking one of her hands in his; 'but I want, Leah, to do the best for you. I really do, and perhaps after a while'—

The girl sprang up from the chair, and in an agony of sobs and tears rushed from the room.

The curative course commenced that day. The rabble of singers, acrobats, musicians, and hangers-on at the Shoreditch Music Hall departed by the evening train, and Dick explained to them that it was by the doctor's strict orders.

For some weeks the strangely assorted husband and wife were left to themselves; still there was no diminution of the symptoms so gravely accentuated by the doctor; and Dick became more and more forcibly convinced that the secret of

the girl's horror was, not of her surroundings, not of the change of life, but of *him*. She pleaded indisposition when he asked her to go out with him. She shut herself up for hours in her own room. She often rose from the dinner table when the meal was but half through. She was sleepless at night. She—the 'Stunning Gipsy Jane' of the music hall, the dashing *soubrette*, the bold, brazen-faced chanter of roaring ditties, the dancer whose steps had an *abandon* which was the delight of the East End, the unblushing hurler of chaff and repartee and slangy retort—started at sudden noises, changed colour when she was spoken to, and had the utmost horror of quiet and darkness. Gradually Dick noticed that the restlessness and feverish activity were being succeeded by dreaminess and lethargy; that her sleepless eyes had the peculiar, heavy look of one whose craving was for sleep; that her hand was unsteady, and that the swart olive of her complexion was changing to an unwholesome yellow.

He sent for the doctor, who shook his head gravely as he said: 'Constitutionally, there is nothing wrong with her; but the mind is killing the body, and she is taking opium to kill the mind. Mr Marsden, there is something at the root of all this *which she is concealing from you*, for it is contrary to every law and every usage of nature for a strong, healthy, young woman, as Mrs Marsden still is, to be sinking into the condition in which she now is.'

THE EXPLOSION OF KITCHEN-RANGE BOILERS.

THE winter is undoubtedly the most appropriate time to call attention to this danger that exists in our households, owing to the fact that although there are four distinct causes of such disasters, frost, which is one of them, takes precedence as being the most prolific of mischief. This article is not intended to be of an alarming nature, but to call attention to what precautions should be adopted, these precautions being of an ordinary and simple kind, and their adoption tending to make these somewhat rare accidents still more unlikely. That the danger does exist there is no denying. It is not often that its occurrence comes to our ears, but its infrequency is no excuse, as in fully half the instances it proves fatal to some one.

The kind of boiler that is accountable for the trouble under discussion is that which exists at the back of the kitchen-range fire, and is in connection with a system of pipes which furnish hot water for baths, &c., in different parts of the house. This boiler is sealed up, and the only outlet for steam—the expansive force which does the hurt—is in the form of an open pipe at the extreme top of the apparatus. There is another relief for any unusual force that may occur, in the cold supply-pipe, as, before an explosion could take place, the force would exert itself through this channel. This is assuming the regular safety-pipe referred to is closed. The danger, therefore, from frost is in its solidifying

the water in this safety-pipe and the cold supply-pipe. The same danger also occurs if the pipes in some other part of the apparatus are frozen, and so cut off the escape of steam by either of the exits named. In other words, there is pronounced danger if, during the night, frost so affects the pipes that when the fire is lighted in the morning any steam generated cannot escape. Steam, as every account of boiler explosions manifests, has enormous force, and it is merely a matter of time and firing to cause it to rend open a strong wrought-iron boiler, and then its effect is most disastrous to anything or any one that may be near.

From this explanation, and knowing how servants light the fires without thinking of frost or peril, it may naturally be thought that accidents might occur oftener than they do. It happens, however, that there are many things—trifling occurrences in themselves—which transpire to obviate danger; and there is no doubt whatever that, during a severe and lasting frost, there are numbers of range-fires lighted when it is almost suicidal to do so, and yet, strangely, seldom any casualty occurs. These incidental elements of safety are, providentially, rather numerous. Firstly, assuming the fire is lighted in ignorance that some dangerous stoppage by frost exists, the gradual heating of the water may cause the ice to melt. The water in the boiler and part of the apparatus cannot be heated to boiling-point and generate steam in a few minutes; and this heating operation, occurring as it does in the tubes in which the ice is, may cause the pipes to clear sufficiently to ensure safety. Secondly, some one may go to a tap, and the mere opening of this ensures relief, as it directly and freely communicates with the source of danger—that is, supposing the tap to be connected at a point below where the frost-bite is, as would probably be the case. Thirdly, upon opening a tap—and taps are being applied to frequently and at all times—the irregular issue of water would indicate something being wrong, and possibly no water whatever would run. With such obvious symptoms of danger as these, the fire would in nine cases out of ten be extinguished, and the possibility of an accident be avoided. There are several other minor things that may occur to ensure safety when highly dangerous conditions actually exist, and, due to these it is that disasters are of much less frequent occurrence than they might otherwise be.

The correct remedy for this state of things is to protect the pipes and apparatus generally from the effects of frost. This can easily be done at a moderate expense, and it will be shown that the results are decidedly conducive to economy and comfort in other ways. To protect the pipes from frost they should be covered wherever they are exposed with some material which has slight heat-conducting properties, and nothing exceeds for this in efficiency the hair-felt, which can be bought at any ironmonger's shop. Properly speaking, a hot-water apparatus of this character should be covered in every part, including the hot-water tank, to effectually prevent loss of heat. The object of the apparatus is to provide heated water at taps; and if the fire is devoted to

this end, it is unreasonable to dissipate the heat, especially where it is not required. In addition to the economy of conserving the heat, the practice goes far towards solving that constant problem, how to ensure a supply of hot water for early bathing, for when the fire is out the water does not cool very materially during the night. If we adopt this suggestion and conserve the heat in the pipes, we shall have no reason to fear frost; but this result can be greatly aided by leaving a fire at night. Doubtless, a number of people have left fires at night in kitchen-ranges with the view to prevent the water freezing, and also with the object of providing the early bath just referred to; yet this plan has not succeeded. The plan does not succeed unless a little care and judgment are used, for, unless it is arranged that the fuel be kept in a state of combustion, and does not go out during the night, failure must follow. The common cause of failure is leaving the boiler damper open. This ensures the water being heated while there is fire; but it creates such a brisk state of combustion that the fire goes out in an hour. It is overlooked what happens after the fire is out; the boiler flue being open, there is a rapid and continuous passage of cold air under the boiler, and this undoes all that the hour's firing has effected. To ensure a range-fire keeping alight a number of hours, the boiler flue must be tightly closed, and the oven dampers only be out sufficiently far to allow the smoke to pass away. Anything like a sharp draught must be avoided; and if small coal and cinders are put on at night, frost will have no serious effect whatever. The fire being in contact with the front plate of the boiler is sufficient to effect this result.

Now, there is another effect of frost to be guarded against, to which the precautions enumerated do not apply—namely, the total failure of water-supply to the house. This, although an active source of danger, is better understood, and is always obvious. It is doubtful if any one should light a range-fire where there is a circulating boiler, knowing that the water-supply is stopped. To do such a thing is highly dangerous, and it occurs in this way. After the water ceases to issue from the taps, there may be a little left in the boiler and a few feet of pipe; but this quantity is evaporated after an hour or so's firing. When the water has disappeared, the boiler becomes red-hot, and should a thaw set in, or water pass from any other cause into the boiler while it is in this state, the result would be an explosion of a terrific nature. A fire should never be lighted in a range of this kind when the water-supply has failed.

From this it will be understood that severe frosts require that attention should be given and precautions taken against their effect upon hot-water apparatus; but there are three other recognised causes that can be explained in their order of precedence as regards danger. The first cause is failure in the water-supply. This is not always due to frost. One instance known to the writer was owing to an extensive leakage which passed unnoticed, due to its occurring in a hollow wall. In country residences, a failure frequently occurs, and the wonder is that accidents are not more common, as the water-supply is usually provided for by an odd man's attention at a pump. It is

when a number of visitors cause an unusual demand for water that the cisterns are emptied. An excellent way of obviating this danger is by having the apparatus erected upon—or altered to—the modern 'cylinder system.' This system does not permit of the hot-water tank being emptied, so that when the water fails, there remain some forty gallons of water to be disposed of by evaporation. This would be an element of safety for many hours even if a large fire was kept going.

The next cause is stopcocks in the circulating pipes. It is not the insertion of one cock only in one of the pipes that is to be condemned; for so long as one pipe remained clear no accident could occur. It is the not infrequent practice of putting cocks in both pipes that is so bad, as it permits of the boiler being cut off from the steam outlet. The object of this practice is to permit of the boiler being emptied and opened for cleaning or repairs without withdrawing the water from the remainder of the apparatus. This is certainly a convenience, but only a small one, as the waste of the water is scarcely worth considering, and a large apparatus can be emptied within an hour. This practice fulfils no useful purpose, and in the hands of unskilled or careless people is an element of danger. About five years ago a plumber, a practical man, who was actually using the cocks, lost his life by forgetting to open them before he lighted the fire.

The last cause is incrustated deposit. As our readers who live in hard-water districts know, there is considerable deposit of a stone-like substance, carbonate of lime, inside boilers and pipes which have water within them and are subjected to great heat. The dangerous element is that the pipes may in course of time become totally stopped with this substance; but, fortunately, as the accumulation occurs it gives unmistakable warning a long time before it reaches a dangerous degree. If it were not for this, explosions from this cause would be quite common; but the warning is compelled to occur, and no one can overlook it. Consequently, it is doubtful if an accident from this cause has ever actually happened. The writer has made inquiries from many sources, but cannot trace such an occurrence. The warning that this accumulating deposit gives differs somewhat occasionally, but it is always in the form of violent noises and vibrations proceeding from the apparatus; and before any danger is to be feared, they are unbearable, and have to be remedied to put an end to the annoyance. When these noises are heard in an old apparatus and they gradually grow worse, it may be taken for granted that some part of the pipes—near the boiler—is becoming choked, and will have to be cleared or renewed.

In conclusion, there is the universal remedy for all the dangers to be suggested, which is an unailing one—the provision of a safety-valve. A discussion occurred recently between several of our best authorities as to whether an accident had been known to occur where a safety-valve was provided. No such instance was known. Considering the little expense a safety-valve involves when the range is first fixed, and the terrible nature of the calamities it obviates, it ought to be compulsory to use it. We shall

perhaps have a little epidemic of explosions some day, and then the authorities may move; but it is to be hoped the epidemic may never occur, or that we may be prepared before the time.

GENTLEMAN GEORGE.

By REGINALD HORSLEY.

"GENTLEMAN GEORGE" is over the border, Sergeant.

"You don't say so, sir!"

"It's a fact. The chance you have been waiting for is come at last. He stuck up the bank at Rosewood and put a bullet through the manager's head. You knew that?"

"Yes, sir. 'Twas his first murder, I believe."

"Yes, his hands were clean of blood up till then; but they all come to it some time if they are out long enough.—How long has Cardale been out?" Cardale was the almost forgotten surname by which "Gentleman George" had been known in days gone by.

"Three years, sir," I replied. "Three years, good measure."

"Ah! well, it is time he was stopped. I suppose he finds Victoria a trifle too hot for him after this rumpus, so he has crossed over to us for a while."

"Is your information reliable, sir?"

"Quite. Foster saw him at Billabong yesterday, and wired."

"Foster! Why didn't he take him, then?"

The Chief smiled. "As well ask the bird why it did not catch the cat. No, no; there is only one man on our side I expect can do that." And he looked at me and laughed.

"Meaning me, sir?"

"Meaning you, Sergeant Sparks."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged, sir."

"Well, then, see that you justify my good opinion.—But you have a wily customer to deal with, Sergeant. Three years out, by Jove! And those Melbourne side troopers are no fools."

"I expect I've got my work cut out, sir."

"I imagine you have.—Now then, off with you at once; get the latest description of the fellow from Foster, and follow him up. It will be five hundred pounds in your pocket if you take him.—And mind," added the Chief impressively after a pause, "mind, it is *dead* or *alive*. Report to me on your return."

I saluted, and withdrew, and ten minutes later was galloping in the direction of Billabong.

Five hundred pounds! It was a big reward; but I tell the honest truth when I say that just then I thought more of the honour and glory of getting the man than the money. For three years the Victorian troopers had been after him, and the best of them had never come next to near him. Sometimes they might get a glimpse of him, but that was all; and once out of sight, George, who was every inch a bushman, could laugh at the lot of them. His mare was a flyer, too, a sort of Australian edition of "Black Bess," and the distances the two of them covered now and again were almost incredible. There wasn't a township in Victoria where the bank manager didn't live in dread of a visit from George; and there wasn't a newspaper in the country that didn't abuse the police for their failure to take

him, and get off leather-headed opinions as to the way in which it ought to be done. However, it never had been done; and for all their smartness, the troopers never had a show. I expect they were heartily sick of the very name of "Gentleman George," and heard of his crossing the border with no little satisfaction. I know I did, for I had heard so much about him that I positively ached to have a slap at him. And now I was actually out after him. No wonder I felt a trifle more excited than usual. If I could manage to nab him at the first try, what a feather that would be in the cap of the New South Wales police!

At Billabong I found Foster—in plain clothes. "Why, what's up? Where's your uniform?" I asked him.

Foster grinned uneasily. "Ask George," he said.

"I will that," I answered, "if ever I come up with him. Do you mean to say he's got it?"

"He has so," replied Foster ruefully; "and my horse and saddle into the bargain."

I roared, laughing. "Well, I'm blest, if that doesn't beat cock-fighting," I cried. "Got your horse too. But where is his mare?"

"How should I know? Got a bullet in her somewhere, very likely. Anyhow, he was riding a sorry beast enough."

"Tell us all about it," I said.

"Well," began Foster gloomily—for he was very sensitive to chaff, and this was not the first mistake he had made by a long way—"I was over at Rogers's about those sheep he lost last week"—this I knew to be Foster's euphemism for taking a drink, but I did not interrupt him. "My horse was hung up outside," he went on, "and we were talking away, when, all of a sudden, in walks George as cool as you please. "Keep your seats, gentlemen," says he, laying a six-shooter on the counter; "keep your seats, or there'll be trouble." We kept 'em."

"What! Were you not armed?"

"No. Why? All was quiet our way. I had no notion George was over the border till he dropped in on us."

"It is always well to be prepared for surprises," I said. "Well?"

"Well, I recognised him at once, for I lived down his way before he took to the bush. Presently he stared at me. "Why, it's Foster," says he. "Hullo, Foster!"—"Hullo, George!" says I. "What's up?"—"You're the right man in the wrong clothes," says he; "they don't suit you a little bit. Take them off and hand them over to me."—"What do you mean?" says I.—"Well," says he, mighty polite, "I'm sorry to inconvenience you, but I'll trouble you for your uniform. That's what I mean."

"And you gave it to him?"

"What could I do? There was no use in swallowing lead for nothing."

"What happened then?"

"He tucked the uniform under his arm, made Rogers give him a nobbler, which he drank off, filled his flask out of the bottle, and turned to the door."

"And you let him go without a word?"

"Oh, I gave him words enough, you bet; but he only laughed; and when he got outside, he jumped on my horse, and says he: "I'll borrow

your nag as well, Foster, as you are so pressing." And with that he rode off.

I laughed again. "Well, he's a cool hand," I said. "Which way did he go?"

"North-east, in the direction of Forty Mile Creek," replied Foster; and proceeded to give me a minute description of the bushranger.

"Well, good-bye, old man," I said when he had finished; "I'll bring back your uniform with George inside it, I hope.—Meantime, I'd advise you not to talk too much "sheep" to Rogers, or you may come to grief. So long!"

"A mighty smart trick that," I thought as I rode along. "A trooper riding through a bush township is no such uncommon sight. I expect I'll have some trouble to strike Master George's trail." And so it proved during the next week, for, though I daresay I was often close behind him, and though I made the most minute and searching inquiries in the various townships I passed as to the appearance of any troopers who had preceded me, yet I never once got any satisfactory information, and I was beginning to despair of ever coming up with my man, when at last, and quite unexpectedly, I did so. "Clever Capture," the newspapers called it. Bosh! It was sheer luck, and nobody ever heard me blow about it. If it had not been for a piece of superb insolence on his part and a fortunate accident on mine, I might very well have missed him altogether.

It was about one o'clock one afternoon that I rode up to the homestead on Toomburra, the owner of which station, Mr Ingram, or 'the Squire,' as he was usually styled, I knew very well. I came in by the back way, and was riding towards the stables, when I noticed a horse hung up to a post by one of the outhouses. I glanced carelessly towards it as I went by; and then, as my eye took in the details, I jumped hastily out of the saddle, and hitching my horse to a sapling, ran hard across the intervening ground. My heart thumped against my ribs from excitement as I saw that my impression had been correct. The strange horse carried a regulation saddle and bridle, and bore the government brand! "Gently," I said to myself. "It won't do to jump at conclusions; this may not be Foster's horse after all." Then I examined the holsters. One was empty, but from the other I drew out a revolver—not regulation. I breathed more freely. "That's better," I muttered; "he's got the other on him for a certainty: I'll make sure of this one at any rate;" and I drew the cartridges and slipped the weapon back into its case. Then I went swiftly round to the front of the house and, sheltering myself behind the creepers which grew thickly over the veranda posts, peered cautiously into the dining-room through the open window. They were all there, the Squire, his wife and daughter, and a young son home for the holidays. But there was some one else, a strapping fellow in police uniform, whose features, as he sat with his back to the window, I could not make out. I don't know him from this side," I said to myself; "but he seems to be on capital terms with the Squire. What if I have made a mistake?" And then I remembered the pistol in the holster, and was comforted.

Making my way round to the back again, I

entered without ceremony, and going noiselessly along the passage, paused for a moment at the dining-room door. There I halted and looked in, and, in the rapid glance I shot at the handsome trooper who was evidently the life and soul of the party, I recognised, by certain peculiarities of feature which Foster had described to me, the man I was after, the redoubtable George himself. I took in the situation in an instant. "By jingo," I grinned to myself, "isn't he a daisy! What magnificent cheek!"

Just then—of course it happened in much less time than it takes to tell—the Squire saw me and jumped up with a loud outcry. "Sergeant Sparks!" he roared, upsetting his chair in the fervour of his hospitable greeting. "Bravo! Are there any more of you? We'll have the whole force here presently. Come and have some dinner. That's right." And he pushed me into a chair opposite the stranger, whose behaviour ever since my entrance I had carefully watched out of the corner of my eye. I must say it was remarkable. His face never changed at all, only I noticed that, as the Squire called out my name, his hand dropped from the level of the table to his belt. That was all: otherwise he sat perfectly still; and then, seeing that I took no manner of notice of him, he resumed his dinner and nodded pleasantly as the Squire, good easy man, with no notion of 'treason, plots, and stratagems,' introduced us to one another.

"You won't know Merton, I expect, Sergeant," he said. "He's from the Melbourne side on special duty."

Now, bluff is a game that two can play at, and, besides, I didn't want bullets flying round the room while the ladies were in it, so I answered quietly: "Indeed. Secret service?"

"Oh, dear no!" said my *soi-disant* comrade, in an extremely pleasant voice, and with an amount of manner which, if he really were 'Gentleman George,' plainly showed how he came by his sobriquet. "Oh, dear no! not at all. I'm out after 'Gentleman George,' who skipped from our side after that shooting affair at Rosewood lately."

I wasn't ready for that, I confess; but I managed to keep a straight face as I replied: "Are you really! Then we can look him up together, for I am out after him too."

"Gad!" said the Squire, "he shouldn't get very far with two such chaps as you after him."

"Ah," said my opposite neighbour, "I've heard of the prowess of Sergeant Sparks. Who hasn't? I think we ought to be sure of our man. Two hundred and fifty apiece, Sergeant, eh?" And he looked at me and laughed.

"Yes," I admitted carelessly, "if we get him. But I don't seem to hear the money jingling in my pockets yet, anyway. Do you know George by sight?" I continued, not looking at him, as I poured out a glass of claret.

"Ra-ther," he returned, laughing again. "Do you?" "Unfortunately, no," I answered. "I've only a somewhat imperfect description to go upon. However, with your help!"

"And your own well-known cleverness," he complimented.

"Thanks," I said, smiling in a pleased fashion. "Well, we shall see. Have you been here long?" I added.

'No; I rode up just about dinner-time, and Mr Ingram insisted on my stopping. I bunked at Waratah last night.'

Fatal error! I lowered my eyes that he might not see the triumph that shone in them. Waratah was a station some five-and-twenty miles away, and I had spent the previous night there myself. I was certain of him now; but it was no part of my plan to let him see it.

The conversation grew general again, and I will say a better table-companion than Merton I never met. He laughed and jested, told a score of excellent yarns, and certainly no one could have suspected that he sat there with a price upon his head, and within a foot or two of a man who was sworn to take him dead or alive. I must admit I admired the fellow, he was so cool.

Presently there came a lull in the flow of talk, and Merton rose from the table. What a remarkably handsome man he was, and what a splendid chest and shoulders! I was not by any means a chicken myself, but I felt if we came to grips he would have the best of me. Therefore, I determined not to give him the chance.

'Excuse me, Mr Ingram,' he said; 'I'll just take a look at my horse and be back again directly.'

'Do you think of going on at once?' I queried.

'Well,' he returned, 'as I didn't know what might happen, I hung up my horse outside; but now that you have turned up, I'll stable him for an hour or so while we discuss the best thing to do.'

'Right you are,' I said; while to myself I added: 'Catch me letting you reach your horse, my fine fellow.' Then I went on aloud: 'I'll take the saddle off my beast as well.'

By this time he had reached the door, from which a long and narrow passage led to the back entrance. I let him get a little way before I rose, for I wanted him well in front of me, and then, after a hurried whisper to Mr Ingram, 'Sit still, Squire, whatever happens,' I bounded into the passage after my quarry. He had not suspected I saw through him, it was evident, so I was on him with the muzzle of my revolver pressed against the back of his neck before he had time to turn, even if it had occurred to him to do so. 'Throw up your hands!' I cried in a low voice. 'Quick! or I'll drop you in your tracks.'

He threw up his hands slowly. 'You are mad,' he said. 'What do you mean?'

'I'll apologise afterwards, if I'm wrong,' I answered. 'Meantime, keep up your hands.' As I spoke, I rapidly unclasped his belt, and threw it with the revolver in it as far behind me as I could. 'Now,' I said, 'march straight on, and'— But the fight was not out of him by any means, though I had him at such disadvantage. With extraordinary quickness, he ducked, and then, turning swiftly round, he struck upwards so fiercely at my right hand that the pistol exploded, the ball burying itself somewhere in the ceiling, as the weapon sailed through the air and dropped some yards behind me; while at the same moment I received a blow on the chest, delivered with such tremendous strength that I reeled right back into the dining-room.

The moment I got to my feet, I rushed after George, who had of course made good his escape by the back door and gained his horse. By the

time I got outside he was off, and I saw him sailing over the slip-rails like a bird.

'So long, Sparks, old man,' he shouted to me. 'You had a good try for it, but you won't collar the five hundred this bout.'

'Won't I!' I yelled after him wrathfully, as I flung myself on my horse.—'What's up?' roared the Squire, rushing madly out.—'Gentleman George,' I howled back as I popped over the slip panels and raced away over the flat on the bushranger's track.

George knew all about riding, I soon saw, for, short as was the start he had got, he made the most of it. We kept the same distance between us for about ten miles, and then, though I knew the pace was too hot to last, yet George's horse was fresher than mine, and I saw that I was losing ground.

'I must stop him,' I muttered. 'If once he reaches the Long Scrub, he'll dismount and get clear away.' So I shouted: 'Halt, George, or I'll fire.' I don't know whether he heard me or not, for he kept straight on; so I let drive at him. It seemed to me that he swayed a little in his saddle, but I could not be certain, and only those who have tried it know how difficult a thing it is to hit a mark when one is going at racing pace. Presently he reached for his holster and drew out the revolver I had replaced. He saw in a moment what had been done, and flinging the weapon aside with a violent gesture, he rode on for dear life.

And now the edge of the Long Scrub came in sight. I drove the spurs into my horse and sent him along for all he was worth. George heard my cries of encouragement, looked round once as a second bullet from my revolver whistled over his head, or buried itself in his body, I could not tell which, and with a yell of defiance, urged his horse into a yet more furious gallop.

Nearer and nearer we drew to the scrub, and the pace was tremendous. The strain was telling fearfully on both horses, and it was evident that neither of them had much more running left in him. George's was labouring fearfully, despite the savage spurring of his rider; while my own faithful roan was sobbing with distress as he struggled gamely, but in vain, to overtake his fellow. And now the goal was very near, and still George thundered on. Would he beat me? I ground my teeth together and called on my horse for one last effort. Gallantly the poor brute responded, and I felt him spring beneath me as he put all his noble heart into the struggle. Hurrah! I was gaining. But, oh, how slowly. It was a question of time, of endurance, and—ha! look at George! Was I blind with excitement, or was he reeling in his saddle? Nearer and nearer—five minutes more and he will be there. Three are gone—four—he is there! And then for one moment I seemed to see him sway from side to side—the next, I was hurled through the air like a bolt from a bow, as my horse, putting his foot in a treacherous hole, came headlong to the ground.

For some moments I lay there stunned; and then, struggling again into consciousness, I tried to rise. But it was no use; my left leg was broken, and I sank back with a groan. Fifty yards away, I saw George supporting himself on one elbow and looking at me.

'Are you hit, George?' I called out.

'Yes,' he answered; 'somewhere in the shoulder. I lost so much blood, I couldn't keep my seat. What's wrong with you?'

'Leg,' I replied laconically. 'Surrender, George.'

He laughed. 'What! To a man with a game-leg? Not I. Besides, what for? You would nurse my wound well again, and then hang me. No, no; I know a trick worth two of that;' and he began to crawl slowly and painfully towards a point somewhere to my right, not, to my surprise, in the direction of the scrub. I watched him for a moment or two as he dragged himself laboriously along. 'What are you at?' I shouted at last, puzzled by his behaviour. He never answered; but with his eyes fixed apparently on some object which I could not see, held straight on his course, his breath coming and going in deep shuddering sighs from the dreadful effort the exertion cost him.

'Whatever can his game be?' I wondered, as, screwing myself round with difficulty, I followed the direction of his intent gaze. I saw it all now! What a fool I had been not to think of it before! Plainly outlined against a tussock of grass by which it had fallen was my revolver, which had been jerked out of my hand as I fell. That was what George was making for.

I wasted no time in words, you may be sure: I wasn't going to lie there to be shot like a dog, and, cursing my own folly, I started to crawl towards the revolver on my own account. I had somewhat the best of it even now, for though George was a little nearer the tussock than I was, yet he was fearfully weak, and more than once he fell over on his side, labouring painfully for breath. But, oh! it was torture for me. Lines of red-hot fire ran up and down my leg, and my very heart ached with the intensity of the pain. The agony was horrible, and over and over again I stopped and sank groaning on my face. But the dreadful issue at stake nerved me, and I held on. I glanced at George, and shuddered, for he was awful to behold. His right arm hung useless by his side; but with his left hand he clutched the grass, or dug his nails into the soil as he dragged himself along, or sank upon his stomach and wriggled forward like a great snake. Great drops of sweat stood out on his forehead and rolled down his cheeks; his teeth were set, and his face, deadly white from loss of blood, wore a look of fierce determination as he rallied after each desperate effort.

All at once, in the midst of that ghastly crawl, I heard the sound of hoofs far away. I never looked round, but I knew what it meant, and a thrill of hope shot through me.

'Give it up, George,' I cried breathlessly. 'The Squire and his men are coming. You've no show, even if you do shoot me.' Not a word said George, only he kept straight on. Nearer and nearer came the thunder of the galloping horses, and nearer and nearer we drew to that deadly revolver, as we laboured along, panting, gasping, groaning, gnashing. Nearer and nearer—I could hear the Squire's shout borne faintly through the clear air. Nearer still, and my heart began to throb exultantly as I realised I was the closer to the goal, when all of a sudden I felt as if all the pain in the world had concentrated itself in my leg. I could not go on, and for one moment at least I had to lie still; and that moment gave

George the advantage, for, as I looked up again, he had reached the revolver. But the terrible strain he had undergone overcame him, and in the very act he sank swooning to the ground. Another instant and it would have been in my grasp, when, with a dying effort, George writhed forward. Our hands met with a shock; but before I could seize his wrist, he snatched the revolver, and with a gigantic heave, rolled over out of reach and lay still. Groaning with pain, I slewed myself round. The Squire and his men were not far away now, and coming on like demons. If I could only reach George before he revived! But it was useless; exhausted nature gave way, and I sat still and despairing.

On came the Squire, shouting like mad. In a moment we should be surrounded: in a moment the danger would be past. Hurrah! I tried to shout, but my parched throat refused its office, and the word died away in a cracked shriek. On thundered the Squire—a couple of hundred yards more and—just then George stirred, heaved a long shuddering sigh, and sat bolt upright, the blood gushing from his mouth and nose, and the revolver tightly clasped in his hand.

I saw it was all up, and steadied myself, determined to meet my fate like a man. Behind me I heard the Squire. In front of me sat George, holding the revolver, and looking deathly as he swayed unsteadily to and fro.

Suddenly he spoke, roused by the shouts that were now almost in our ears. 'I'm done for,' he gasped. 'If it were only you, I'd have a break for freedom; but there are too many. Look here, Sergeant. I was born a gentleman—I've come down a good deal—but I'll die like one. You shan't put the rope round my neck. You shan't.' He raised the revolver to his head, and then, catching sight of my amazed face, he lowered it again and broke into a low gurgling laugh. 'Why, bless you, Sergeant,' he said, 'it was for myself—not for you. So long! So'—There was a sharp report, and even as the Squire leaped from his reeking horse and rushed forward, 'Gentleman George' fell on his face and lay still—still for ever, this time.

Yes, they took me back to Toomburra, and nursed my leg well again, and I got the reward; but, somehow, whenever I remember George, I am glad he got hold of the revolver first.

SEA-VOICES.

Up from the Deeps the mystic voices come—
The mystic, moaning Voices of the Sea;
They sing their 'Miserere' ceaselessly.
I stand and listen to them, stricken dumb.
Aye mingling with the tangled notes of Time,
They chant in mighty harmony below:
'Through grief and pleasure, Life must onward go,
Till God's deep bells the resting-hour shall chime.'
And from the heaving bosom of the Sea
Comes, like a sigh of love, the word to me:
'Though thou shalt see no light in coming years,
Hold thou to this: that good oft seemeth ill,
And that, through storm and darkness moving still,
Man's life is set to music of the spheres.'

J. J. HALDANE BURGESS.

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